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Grattan report shows the time is right for a sugary drinks tax in Australia

The Obesity Policy Coalition has welcomed a major Grattan Institute report recommending the introduction of a tax on sugary drinks in Australia, which is urgently needed to help curb increasing rates of obesity and chronic disease.

Obesity Policy Coalition executive manager Jane Martin said sugary drinks taxes were becoming the norm around the world, with 16 countries now having implemented or announced the measure.

“Australia is facing an obesity crisis with almost two-thirds of adults and more than a quarter of children now overweight or obese,” Ms Martin said.

“The evidence is in – we know from overseas experience that taxing sugary drinks works to reduce consumption, particularly among young people, which is why the World Health Organization recommends the policy and countries like the UK and South Africa have jumped on board.

“A 600ml bottle of soft drink contains 16 teaspoons of sugar and about 1000 unnecessary kilojoules, with absolutely no nutritional value.

“We know a tax on sugary drinks can help reduce rates of obesity and chronic disease, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease, which will overwhelm our health system in the near future without decisive action.”

Ms Martin said there was strong public support for a tax on sugary drinks, with 69% of Australian grocery buyers supporting the measure if the revenue is used to subsidise healthy foods.¹

“We need to get serious about acknowledging the true cost of these drinks, and a sugary drinks tax is the best way to do this,” Ms Martin said.

“Australians are heavy consumers of sugary drinks and consumption is highest among younger Australians and those on low-incomes, which unfairly burdens these groups with an increased risk of chronic disease.

When the price increases, it influences these groups to shift away from sugary drinks.”

¹ Morley B et al., ‘Public Opinion on Food-related Obesity Prevention Policy Initiatives’ (2012) 23(2) *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*

Media release





Ms Martin said pockets of the community had already acted to reduce consumption of sugary drinks, with the YMCA phasing out the sale of sugary drinks in its venues, and some hospitals and sporting clubs adopting other measures to encourage healthier drink choices.

“It’s time for the Federal Government to do its part and announce a plan to implement a tax on sugary drinks, as part of a comprehensive plan for reducing rates of overweight and obesity in Australia,” Ms Martin said.

Media release

About the Obesity Policy Coalition

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a group of leading public health agencies who are concerned about the high levels of overweight and obesity, particularly in children.

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a partnership between Diabetes Victoria, Cancer Council Victoria and the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University, with funding from VicHealth.

